

Inaugural Speech

January 1, 2004

Jon Kaiman - Supervisor, Town of North Hempstead

Good morning. Welcome Rabbi Stecker, our new senior Rabbi at Temple Israel of Great Neck and Moderator Watson of Westbury. Welcome my former judicial colleagues Judge Riordan and Judge Jaeger. Welcome officials, leaders, friends and family.

The inauguration of a new administration is a special moment in time. It is a time of renewal, of opportunity, of ideas. It is a moment when all is possible.

Those of us being inducted today now have the opportunity and, in fact, the responsibility to build upon the great legacy that we have inherited. And it is a great legacy.

It would not be appropriate to speak of my future goals without first acknowledging the foundation laid by the Newburger Administration over the last ten years. When May Newburger was sworn in ten years ago, the town faced a multimillion dollar deficit; bond rating agencies had twice downgraded the town's credit rating; the town's two landfills were festering sores of blight and contamination while the funds generated from our landfill tipping fees were no longer available to prop up the town's financial picture. A mass burn incinerator was to be the funding source of the future, but that option was rejected by the people of this town and so there was no money to even pay for the 70 million dollars in debt already accrued for the Morewood property on which the incinerator was to be built. The story goes on with most of the town's troubles emanating from waste management issues that have haunted us to this day.

With these problems before her, May proceeded to deal with these problems head on, making the difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions with the goal of making sure each problem was dealt with in an appropriate, responsible, and meaningful way. Her path was the one less traveled, but it was the path that would serve the people of North Hempstead in the long run and we who live in North Hempstead will all benefit from the decisions that she made.

Today, the town has a multimillion dollar surplus; the credit ratings is at the highest level it has ever been at after being upgraded three times over the last six years; the landfills are closed, cleaned and sealed; and the old sand mine property is now a championship golf course, soccer fields, housing and a wildlife preserve.

There is much more that we can speak of including the Environmental Legacy Fund, the cleaning of our bays and waterways, the establishment of new parks and trails, and the building of a new main street in New Cassel which will commence this year.

And so, today begins the next chapter for the Town of North Hempstead. I am honored to have been chosen to lead this government. I've served as a District Court Judge, a Public

Safety Commissioner, and a municipal attorney and I now stand before you as the Supervisor of the Town of North Hempstead.

I believe, like many of the other elected and appointed officials here today, that government service is an honorable profession where one can dedicate him or herself to public service. As a high school student in New Jersey, I was once criticized by a teacher for skipping class to go to a rally against a nuclear power plant in Long Island. I was advised by this teacher that if I really wanted to make a difference, I should finish high school, go to college and put myself in a position to make or shape the laws instead of just shouting down those who have taken that responsibility themselves. I took that advice to heart.

I came to Long Island to attend college at Hofstra, entered an honors program there, received political science honors as well, and immersed myself in the study of government and politics. I attended law school at Hofstra as well and would eventually make my home and raise my family here in North Hempstead. I've been involved in politics and government now for over 20 years. I've come to recognize and appreciate the critical role played by our local governments and I am proud to be in this honorable and important position where I shall make and shape the laws of my community.

It is my intention in the months and years ahead to focus on issues involving infrastructure, environment, and quality of life. We will continue the responsible financial oversight and decision making exemplified by the past administration while we look to preserve and improve upon the community in which we live.

At a moment of renewal and regeneration, I look forward to working as a team with the six council members who have been inducted with me today. This is an historic day in that regard for as we all know, this is the first board that shall represent individual districts.

I welcome the council members who retained their seats, Anthony D'Urso, Fred Pollack, Wayne Wink and Tom Dwyer. I welcome back in the spirit of bipartisanship, former council member Angelo Ferraro who I've come to know and respect over the years. His commitment to public service is sincere and though we have differed in the past and will do so in the future, there is much that we will agree on. And I welcome with open arms the first African American council member in the Town of North Hempstead, Robert Troiano who is intelligent, independent and committed to making his community a better place. I look forward to working with our new Receiver of Taxes Rocco Iannarelli who is replacing the wonderful and accomplished Ann Galante and I welcome back my neighbor and the best darn clerk in New York State, Michelle Schimel.

It is my intention to present to our new town board recommendations that are available to us today because of the great work and leadership of the Supervisor May Newburger. It is my intention to ask this board to reach into the surplus accumulated over the last number of years and find one million dollars to put toward paying down our town debt. The debt was not of our making. It is the result of decisions made and not made well over a decade

ago. But we will continue the steps taken by the Newburger administration to manage and reduce the debt that currently exists.

I will ask this board to follow through on Councilman Dwyer's idea that we create a Business Development Corporation to provide support and guidance to the business community within our town. We welcome business that provides services to our community while being the source of much of our tax revenue. This is conditioned, however, on businesses being good neighbors by maintaining their property, operating within our town codes, and operating in a manner consistent with the expectations of our communities.

I will work with this board to develop a planning model for future development that will be community based, environmentally sensitive, sustainable and smart.

I will work with this board to develop a constituent service operation that reflects the needs of our residents and takes advantage of modern technology and experience. In this vein, it is my intention to establish the 311 non-emergency phone number in North Hempstead in conjunction with Nassau County so that we can respond to any constituent call, inquiry, or complaint within hours while logging in and following up on issues that require future action.

I look forward to working with the County Executive and his new, emerging economic development team on such critical projects such as our Prospect Avenue corridor which is nothing less than the building of a modern, sustainable Main Street in an economically depressed area of our town. And in encouraging the growth of a high tech, bio-medical corridor in Nassau County which goes through North Hempstead beginning with the extraordinary iPark facility where we are planting the seeds of high tech growth, high paying jobs, and clean industry. From such seeds shall spring the future economic engine that will sustain this county for generations to come. I applaud the County Executive for having the vision to pursue his economic development plan and I acknowledge the extraordinary effort of my friend Peter Sylver for laying the foundation for making that vision a reality. While there are bumps in the road in all great endeavors, I am confident that our county is moving forward in a manner that will improve the quality of life for all of us who live here in Nassau County.

In North Hempstead, we shall pursue an environmental agenda following in the footsteps of the Newburger Administration. The Environmental Legacy fund will continue to be a tool to preserve open space and create additional park land in all parts of the town, both north and south of the Long Island Expressway. We will continue to clean our waterways and blaze new walking trails with the help of our community and environmental groups such as the Residents for a More Beautiful Port Washington and our local civic associations.

We will focus on the enforcement of our town codes to make sure that our structures are safe and that our communities are not bearing a greater burden than necessary due to illegal housing and a disregard for our town codes.

We will work with our fire and police services to ensure the safety of our communities during emergency situations as well as our every day activities.

We look forward to working with the villages and districts that lie within our borders as well as with our neighboring municipalities.

We in North Hempstead are fortunate to have within our jurisdiction, Assemblyman Tom DiNapoli, one of the leaders of the state assembly who is known with affection to all of us and who continues to be a great resource for and leader within our community. I also acknowledge assembly members David Sidikman and Maureen O'Connell who have also been very helpful to many within the town.

We are also fortunate to have with us today David Patterson who is the minority leader of the New York State Senate. He is a force to be reckoned with and I am proud to walk under his tent in the political realm. That being said, I must also acknowledge the great efforts on behalf of our community by Senator Michael Balboni who though on the other side of the political aisle from myself, has always been a gentleman and friend to all of us who live in the Town of North Hempstead.

I tip my hat to our congressional members who represent parts of North Hempstead. Congressman Gary Ackerman and Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy are both individuals for whom I have the greatest respect and the deepest admiration. Thank you for the work you've done on our behalf, we will be calling upon you again.

Of course, our two great United States Senators, one of whom is here with us today – Senator Chuck Schumer, are examples of America's ability to produce great leaders from good people. I am proud to call each of them my senator and I believe America is a better place because of the efforts they each make on our behalf.

I would like to thank the New York State Attorney General for his help and friendship and our State Controller Allan Hevesi who was there for us as well during the last several months.

I would like to thank on behalf of myself and my ticket the leadership of our county leader Jay Jacobs and the staff that work with him. I must acknowledge and thank again the great work of our local Town leader, the great Joe Galante who is one of the reasons we are all here today. In that same vein, I would also acknowledge some of the key leaders who also made this day possible, including Gerard Terry, Lee Seeman, and Jerry Scharfman.

I thank our County Executive Tom Suozzi who came through for me in many ways during this campaign. He is a true friend to North Hempstead and is doing an amazing job in such a short time as our county executive. Our expectations of him are so high we sometimes fail to see how hard his job is and how good a job he really doing.

I, of course, acknowledge the great May Newburger who has been my mentor and is one of the key reasons that I am standing before you today.

I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary work of all of those who helped us during our campaign such as Cathy Cleaver, Scott Levinson, Rachel Mann, Lauren Corcoran, Caisy Goldschmidt, John and Michelle Darcy, Brian Blessy and the rest of the staff and volunteers who worked so hard to help us achieve this extraordinary victory. I also thank Kimberly Corcoran who will be singing God Bless America in a few moments – I promise.

I would like to acknowledge the great efforts and sacrifice of the family members of each of the candidates whose support makes all the difference in the world. Personally, I would like to recognize my wife Kim and my two sons Shaunen and Jared for being there for me, I love you very much. I thank my mother who is here today, and my father who is no longer with us, but who remains very much a part of my life and a part of my success. I thank Bob Feldman, Bob Goldberg, my aunt and uncle Bob and Julie Schartoff, as well as my brothers Keith and Benjamin and my sister Andrea. Happy birthday Andrea and Keith. I thank my cousins Jodi, Tedi, Adam and Karen and I thank my friends, and my supporters, and my contributors and all of you who believed in me.

I thank all of you for being here on this New Years Day. Thank you for being part of our effort. Thank you for being part of our future. Happy New Year to all. God Bless America.